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not only necessary, but it is the only constituent of his diet which actually ranks as food. All other foodstuffs, whatever their nutritive value, he considers merely as additions to the essential *ubwali*, as snacks to be eaten before the main meal is prepared, or as substitute foods during the hunger months. In fact, there are very few types of food which he eats without porridge, except the various gourds and pumpkins on which he is forced to live when his grain is exhausted, or sweet potatoes—a fairly recent introduction—maize, honey, and fruits of the bush. All these may be eaten freely, but are simply not considered to make a meal. I have watched natives eating the roasted grain off four or five maize cobs under my very eyes, only to hear them shouting to their fellows later, 'Alas, we are dying of hunger. We have not had a bite to eat all day'. This attitude is in complete contrast to that of most of the Southern Bantu, who live almost entirely on maize.[1]

The importance of millet porridge in native eyes is constantly reflected in traditional utterance and ritual. In proverb and folk-tale the word *ubwali* stands for food itself. When discussing his kinship obligations, a native will say, 'How can a man refuse to help his mother's brother who has given him *ubwali* all these years?' or, 'Is he not her son? How should she refuse to make him *ubwali*?' In fact, he uses the word as we do 'bread' in such phrases as 'daily bread' or 'working for our bread and butter', but more constantly, and really with better reason.

In Bemba ceremonial *ubwali* stands for food and indirectly for ordinary daily intercourse. Millet flour, meat, and salt represent the essential foodstuffs in the girl's initiation rite (*icisungu*), and at the founding of a chief's village, when small portions of each are buried beneath the walls of the Sacred Kitchen of the tribe.[2] At marriage a ceremonial exchange of dishes of *ubwali* between the relatives of the bridegroom and the bride occurs at one stage of the proceedings. A tiny lump of the porridge, made with special ritual precautions, is used to touch the lips of any individuals coming to an end of a ritual fast, whether during initiation, marriage, inheritance, &c. Further, an individual may himself announce that he is going to abstain from *ubwali* in order to show that he wishes to put himself in a special class apart from the ordinary activities of his fellows. Men or women

[1] Eaten, of course, in larger quantities and prepared as flour—'mealie-meal'.
[2] Cf. p. 48[illegible]

[Erratum, should be p. 148. — Analyst]

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437 643 644 651 importance politically that it is supervised personally by the *mfumu* himself, who watches meat cut up in front of him and gives the orders for grain to be given out. A special steward is in charge of his big personal granary and hands out baskets of grain each morning to the senior wives in charge of the feeding of the *umulasa* labourers, or the brewing of beer for any special purposes. The wives themselves have their own small personal granaries and cook dishes for the chief which he divides as he pleases,[1] or make presents of beer as they choose. All the three or four senior wives distribute hospitality to honoured guests in their own rights, and the *umukolo*, in particular, is required to be very punctilious in sending dishes of honour to travelling notables.

All the *bamukolo* I met were women of a good deal of organizing ability, capable of supervising the younger wives, arranging for the endless grinding and brewing required in the capital,[2] and the stirring of the huge pots of porridge to be served in enormous eating-baskets about eight times the size of an ordinary *icipe*. Any one who sits in the inside of an *umukolo's* hut during the late afternoon will know at once by the bustle, the concentrated faces, and the ring of waiting food-baskets that important and responsible work is on hand.

The whole of this system of distributing food is of course necessary to the chief if he is to make gardens and conduct tribal business through his councillors. But it is more than this. The giving of food, as in most African tribes, is an absolutely essential attribute of chieftainship, just as it is of authority in the village or household, and the successful organization of supplies at the capital seems to be associated in the Bemba mind with the security and well-being of the whole tribe itself. This fact may be said to 344 786 be symbolized by the institution of the sacred kitchen (*kamitembo*) at the courts of the big chiefs (Citimukulu, Mwamba, and Nkula). From the outside the *kamitembo* looks like an ordinary hut, although specially well built. It is one of the sacred houses built by the *bakabilo* with special rites at the founding of a chief's new village. In fact it is the first to be built on the site. At Citimukulu's founding ceremony a special hereditary official, the Mwana Bwalya,

[1] The cooking of the chief's own food is usually done by the *umukolo* herself, or by some old woman specially appointed to the task, since the taboos protecting his fire from sex impurity are very strict.

[2] Chiefs' wives do not have to pile branches in the fields, but do very heavy grinding-work for beer-making and feeding the workers.

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crosses the Kalungu river near the capital at dead of night and has ritual intercourse with a woman given him for the purpose on the spot selected for the building of the *kamitembo*. Thus he 'warms the bush' (*ukukafye mpanga*) and leaves immediately afterwards secretly for his own village. On the place where his sleeping mat lay, one of the *bakabilo*, Cishika, the hereditary lighter of the chief's fire, must immediately make new fire by friction. This is the chief's sacred fire. The same patch of grass serves as site for the *kamitembo* house built a day or so after by all the *bakabilo* in concert after prayers by the Citimukulu and the burial of flour, salt, meat, and fish in the foundations. Once built the sacred hearth must be installed (*ukuteka ishiko*) and this is done as the climax of the long ceremonial founding of the village,[1] by killing a female sheep, and cooking it in the hut on the sacred fire with salt made from river grasses. This use of the traditional salt of the tribe is said to ensure that the land may be savoured (*calo cilowe*). Two big baskets are then cooked on the same hearth and carried to the chief, who tastes the porridge and meat and then hands it to all his *bakabilo* to eat. This is the way in which the 'spirits are put into the hut' (*ukubike mipashi mu panda*), so that the life of the new village may begin.

After this the chief's fire burns perpetually in the *kamitembo* as also in two other sacred houses in the village and it remains under the special charge of the *umukolo*.[2] No person of sexual vigour may enter for fear of polluting the fire, and the chief's messages are carried there by small boys. Within the hut were piled in the old days the carrying poles on which tribute of beer and meat had been slung—signs of the chief's greatness—and the elephant tusks brought him. This is no longer done, but the beer required for big sacrifices to the land spirits is brewed in the *kamitembo*, and the chief and his head wife sleep here during this period, keeping sex taboos all the while. This is described as 'waiting for the yeast of the land' (*ukulindilo musunga we calo*). Animals killed for sacrifices are also killed here, and the new crops cooked before being offered for the first-fruits are

[1] The ceremony of founding the last new village for the Citimukulu took from May to September 1933. I witnessed the first part of the ceremony but not the installation of the sacred hearth.

[2] The *umukolo* should only have ritual intercourse with the chief on ceremonial occasions and therefore as a person sexually pure remains a fit guardian of the tribal fire.

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344 cooked on the same sacred hearth. It is in fact the sacred kitchen and storehouse of the tribe.

344 437 643 The whole institution of the *kamitembo* illustrates to my mind that close association between authority and the power to distribute provisions on which the tribal organization depends. The chief owns the food and receives tribute, and the chief provides for his subjects and distributes cooked food to them. Both these attributes are symbolized in the *kamitembo* house.

437 We started to discuss the use of food as a payment for labour as part of a study of domestic economics, but we have been inevitably led to consider the deep-rooted political and religious beliefs connected with this form of distribution. They are beliefs that are very much alive to-day and insensibly affect all attitudes between ruler and ruled whether white or black. The European generally gives his native employee food as well as money wages. He does so usually for the purely practical reason that he is afraid that otherwise his servants will starve and spend their money on clothes. But to the native the white man's provision of food puts him in a special relationship which is quite different from an ordinary business transaction. He becomes 'his man' in a special sort of way.

Tribal Distribution and the Individual Ration.

262 We have described the distribution of cooked food among the Bemba, and some of the social and economic uses to which foodstuffs are put. It remains to indicate the effect of these different cultural regulations on the daily intake of the individual members of the tribe. Briefly speaking, these are two in number. A fairly even distribution of supplies is produced in any one village on any particular day, but a great irregularity in the individual amounts eaten as from day to day or month to month.

The causes of these changes in the daily intake can be readily deduced from the foregoing chapters. The first is the varying numbers of helpers who join to form each elder woman's cooking team, giving to some ample labour for the lengthy processes of grinding and cooking, while others belong to so small a family group that they are unable to prepare a proper meal at the busy times of the year.[1]

[1] A point to be borne in mind when the advisability of establishing isolated homesteads for individual families is discussed.